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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3549
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1548
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9740
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 8986
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: BNP SECRETARY GENERAL OUT TO REPLACE ZIA

Classified by Deputy Chief of Mission Geeta Pasi, Reason:
1.4 (D), Derived from: DOS Classification guide, DTD Jun
[189](#).

[11](#). (C) Summary: BNP Secretary General Bhuiyan confirmed to us he aspires to take over the leadership of his party once the military persuades Chairperson Khaleda Zia to leave Bangladesh. He is also considering leading a new national government, replacing the current caretaker regime, to carry out reforms before the next general elections. End Summary

[12](#). (C) On March 18, Bhuiyan bitterly criticized to us former Prime Minister Zia for allowing her sons, brothers, and other relatives and political intimates to indulge in unbridled corruption. He confirmed widespread reports that he aspires to take over the party leadership once the military persuades or forces Zia to go into exile. Bhuiyan said he is under mounting pressure from party leaders, disgruntled with Zia's leadership, to challenge her leadership. Some military leaders, he said, want him to split the BNP, but he expressed doubt he could create a viable faction so long as Zia is in Bangladesh.

[13](#). (C) Bhuiyan said that, soon after promulgation of the state of emergency, the army asked Zia to send her son Tarique Rahman abroad and clean up her party so she could still lead the country. Zia initially agreed but later shifted her stand, he said. Zia reportedly became angry with Bhuiyan when he advised her to comply with the army's request, but when she finally decided no counter-coup was in sight to save her, the army's stance had hardened.

[14](#). (C) Bhuiyan said that a national government with representatives from different political parties should replace the current government to reverse economic drift and restore popular confidence in civilian rule. Gono Forum president Kamal Hossain and Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus may be part of this government, and a referendum might be necessary to validate this government and its actions.

[15](#). (C) Bhuiyan criticized the army's apparent desire to generate a political party with deserters from the BNP, the Awami League, and other parties. Instead, he said, the army should help the parties reform themselves and allow the one that wins a free and fair election to form the government. Bhuiyan noted without comment the current rumor that Chief of Army Staff General Moeen wants to become president after the incumbent's term expires in September.

¶6. (C) Comment: Zia's critics within the BNP differ on whether Bhuiyan is the person to lead the party after Zia. His reluctance to challenge Zia face to face, leaving it to others to clear the field for him, underscores why internal reform for the BNP, or the Awami League for that matter, has always been so difficult. The timing of Hasina's departure from Bangladesh, just days before her father's high-profile birthday anniversary, has fueled speculation she was forced to leave, and may increase the pressure on Zia to follow suit.

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